

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

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Congress must act now on immigration reform

Congress must seize the fleeting opportunity to solve the immigration crisis threatening America's economic and national security.

America's immigration system is a disaster.

We must enhance our border security — and that very well might include erecting new barriers.

Our schools, criminal justice system and hospitals are terribly overburdened.

Millions who play by the rules have to wait years to immigrate legally.

Tragically, hundreds have died in the Arizona desert while this issue remains unresolved.

We do need to get tough on illegal immigration. We also need to get smart.

Advocating a stricter version of the current broken policy is not an answer.

But recent developments in Congress provide cause for optimism.

In the House, Rep. Jeff Flake is joined by his Arizona colleagues Ed Pastor, Raul Grijalva and Gabrielle Giffords in sponsoring the STRIVE Act that addresses the broad range of issues that need to be in any workable reform legislation.

In the Senate, Sen. Jon Kyl has worked with the other senators to forge a bipartisan compromise that secures U.S. borders, gives employers the tools necessary to verify employment eligibility, provides temporary workers for jobs Americans won't do, and brings the undocumented out of the shadows without amnesty.

If reform has any chance of passing the 110th Congress, it must happen now, before 2008's campaign politics make statesmanship and compromise practically impossible.

Arizona can't wait until 2009 or 2010 for a solution.

That is why we have joined with more than 100 employers and trade associations to form Arizona Employers for Immigration Reform.

AZEIR has met with Arizona's congressional delegation at their Arizona offices and on Capitol Hill.

Our delegation is very aware that Arizona and America are experiencing labor shortages across many job categories, shortages that are projected to widen as the baby-boom generation retires.

Moreover, they tell us the consequences of failing to fix the broken immigration system are too grave. In an age of terrorism, drug smuggling, human trafficking and lawlessness, our national security demands a solution.

To support a solution now, AZEIR has launched a television and radio campaign urging pro-reform Arizonans to call Congress at 1-(202) 224-3121.

We invite you to visit our Web site (www.azeir.org) to learn more about the issue and to view our ads.

The next few weeks and months will be critical to achieving the immigration reform that is needed and deserved by Arizona and America.

— **Sheridan Bailey**, Phoenix
— **Richard Walden**, Sahuarita

Sheridan Bailey, president of Ironco Enterprises in Phoenix, and Richard Walden, president of Farmers Investment Co. in Sahuarita, are co-founders of Arizona Employers for Immigration Reform.